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Letter dated 19 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made on 11 February 1999 by the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation concerning the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "General and complete disarmament".

(*Signed*) S. Lavrov

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Annex

Statement made on 11 February 1999 by the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Intensive consultations on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) are continuing "in all directions". There has been some encouraging progress. In particular, we have achieved an important understanding with Ankara on the settlement of flank problems, which has met with the support of the other participants in the negotiations process.

The most important thing now is to concentrate on another key issue: ensuring strategic stability in Central Europe through arms-control mechanisms. Efforts are being made at the bilateral level in capitals and at the multilateral level through the Russian Federation/North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and at the Vienna negotiations on the adaptation of the CFE Treaty. The other day, an important meeting was held with the NATO high-level working group on the adaptation of the CFE Treaty, at which there was a comprehensive and frank exchange of views that made it possible to come up with a clear outline for a possible compromise. It is imperative to find such solutions in the coming weeks so that the accession to NATO of three new members, expected in the first half of March, does not jeopardize the viability of the CFE Treaty. We are convinced that, if the interested countries demonstrate the necessary flexibility and political determination, we shall have very good prospects for success.